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EDUCATIONAL WRITINGS

With this issue of the *Journal* a division on "Educational Writings" is inaugurated. This division will be devoted to review and comment on various types of educational literature relating to elementary schools. It happens that during the summer just past an unusually large number of new books have appeared which may be classified as general educational literature. A brief review of these books is here presented as the first instalment of this department. The *Journal* receives from educational publishers their significant books. It will welcome, however, the reactions of readers as well as publishers, and if its readers will express their views on any books which they have found to be of special use, the *Journal* will welcome the opportunity of transmitting these views to others who are looking for helpful educational discussions.

This book¹ may be divided into three sections. The first deals with the physical characteristics of the child. It reports the investigations which have been made on growth and it contains also a full account of the nervous system. Following this is a section dealing with general psychology. This section contains the usual topics that are discussed in psychology, such as instinct, habit, association, memory, attention, etc. Finally, the last division of the book, which is relatively short, gives an account of school activities, beginning with a discussion of the different periods of school life and concluding with a discussion of the psychology of all of the fundamental school processes.

The book is intended to be used as a general textbook and to this end summarizes a large part of the recent technical literature on these various subjects. It is as comprehensive a book as has lately appeared on these subjects. There are no important contributions made by the author himself except the formulation

¹ *The Mental and Physical Life of School Children*. By Peter Sandiford. Pp. 346. New York; Longmans, Green & Co.

of the results of other workers. The large emphasis which is laid upon the physical nature of the child is in a measure a departure from the conventional treatment of educational psychology and will undoubtedly be useful in calling attention to an important phase of child-study. The psychology of the second part of the book is of the familiar, conventional type. Although the treatment begins with the discussion of instinct and habit, it passes very soon into the type of association psychology which has long been familiar to English readers. The results of the child-study investigations are included as far as possible in the text, but the relation of the psychological treatment to the later discussion of school subjects is not intimate. The section on school subjects is the best brief summary of this material that has yet been prepared. This section will be found to be very useful to teachers, more useful probably than the middle section of the book, which attempts to summarize psychology.

On the whole, the book may be described as the best elementary review of this material now at hand. The book ought to take the place that was filled for a time by Kirkpatrick's *Fundamentals of Child Study*. It is more up to date than any summary of the child-study movement and contains the new material on the psychology of reading, spelling, arithmetic, and other school subjects.

Professor O'Shea of the University of Wisconsin has undertaken the editorship of a series of educational volumes which are intended to appeal to lay readers as well as to teachers. These volumes are all to be about 250 pages in length and will deal with different aspects of the school and social situation. Four volumes of this series have already appeared. One of them can be passed with a mere mention as it relates primarily to the high-school period and is likely to be of interest to elementary teachers only in so far as they are concerned with the transitions from the elementary school to the high school.¹ It ought to be remarked, however, in this connection that elementary teachers would profit by cultivating more interest in the upper schools than they usually exhibit. Mr.

¹ *The High-School Age*. By Irving King. (Childhood and Youth Series, edited by M. V. O'Shea.) Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Pp. 233.

King gives a brief summary of the mental and physical characteristics of adolescent youth. He discusses a number of the high-school problems, such as the difficulties which arise from outside engagements. He has some original investigations on this topic. On the whole, the volume is a very useful summary of the more elaborate discussions on the high-school period.

The second volume of the series¹ is a popular exposition of the experiments which have been performed on the learning process. Mr. Swift summarizes his own investigations and those of others, giving a number of typical learning-curves, together with a description of the experiments which were made in securing these learning-curves. He discusses also a number of the important problems of school hygiene, such as economy in learning and the best methods of memorizing and arranging materials which are to be mastered through school work.

His final chapter on "New Demands on Schools" attempts to state in a brief, popular form the significance of the general doctrine of development and variation for school work. There is a plea for recognition of individual differences and for an accommodation of the school work to the changes that have been going on in social organization.

This book exhibits the virtues and at the same time the difficulties of a series of brief, popular treatises on education. Many of the author's opinions appear to be mere assertions of individual belief because in a volume of this compass it is necessary to leave out the evidence which lies back of these views. At the same time the statement of these views undoubtedly has some value in that it will call the attention of many readers to the changes that are going forward in modern education.

The third volume of the series² comes from the pen of a mother who has devoted very large attention to the training of her daughter. The editor compares the book to Rousseau's *Émile*. Mrs. Stoner began preparing her child for the career which she had planned for

¹ *Learning and Doing*. By Edgar James Swift. (Childhood and Youth Series, edited by M. V. O'Shea.) Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Pp. 249.

² *Natural Education*. By Winifred Sackville Stoner. (Childhood and Youth Series, edited by M. V. O'Shea.) Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Pp. 295.

her by quieting her restlessness in the cradle with lines from Vergil's *Aeneid*. The child very soon accumulated so much Latin and other foreign languages that she seems to be a leader in the Esperanto movement. In fact, we are told that the eight-year-old girl gives lessons in this subject and apparently is one of the most proficient disciples of this cult. She has acquired a large mastery of numbers through various games which the mother evidently plays with her as one of the common forms of amusement. The child writes jingles and indeed has written them since she was four years old. She copies on the typewriter and writes compositions on natural objects which she observes. She is described as being unusually husky and athletic, evidently more than a match for all of the small boys in the neighborhood.

The fundamental theory on which she has been brought up is at times a little vague. In one part of the book we find Mrs. Stoner objecting to the learning of the names of all of the different capes and bays around the coast of Africa, while on another page we are assured that the child knows the names of all of the capitals of the states in the United States.

There is a good deal of quotation from various authors who have evidently been of encouragement to the mother in the work she has undertaken. On the whole, the book, like a number of others which have recently appeared, will persuade those who read it that children can accomplish a great deal more than is ordinarily expected of them in school work. Like most of the ambitious tutors of children supposed to be extremely precocious, the mother evidently regards foreign language as a matter of very large importance. One thinks of the historical examples of children who mastered long lists of foreign languages. There is relatively little in the book to show any clear appreciation of the necessity of training the child in methods of reasoning. Where the book deals briefly from time to time with such problems, there is evidence that there is no very definite notion of what reasoning consists in or how it can best be trained.

There can be no doubt that home training of this intensive type would do much to improve schools, and Mrs. Stoner's contention that the school is seriously handicapped because parents fail to

do their duty by their children will be heartily seconded by the technical reader of the book.

The fourth volume¹ reports, as does the monograph described below, a series of investigations of the methods of teaching spelling. It also presents a number of word lists which will be useful to teachers in determining the vocabulary which the child ought to acquire during his school work. The various simple rules which can be utilized in remembering the arrangement of letters in confusing words are briefly reviewed. The types of error which children commonly make are pointed out. The relative value of word lists and composition work in teaching spelling was investigated by one of the authors.

The improvement of spelling ought certainly to follow upon investigations of the type of those here recorded. One wonders how long the investigations which deal with the present form of English spelling will be necessary before it becomes apparent to everyone that a change in these matters ought to be introduced into the language as well as into school practice.

Spelling is one of the subjects in which the material is perfectly definite and capable of exact description. One hardly knows how to describe the topics in geography because they may include a great deal or they may include very little. But the list of words to be taught in spelling is capable of definite determination. Mr. Jones² has with great industry prepared a list for the different grades of the elementary school on the basis of compositions written by many children through a long period of years. This list he has arranged according to the various grades so that it is possible to determine from the actual practices of children in the school something of the expectation which the school should entertain regarding the vocabulary of children. Incidentally the pamphlet throws a good deal of light on the number of words used in different grades and by different individuals. The vocabulary of children in the

¹ *The Child and His Spelling*. By W. A. Cook and M. V. O'Shea. (Childhood and Youth Series, edited by M. V. O'Shea.) Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Pp. 282.

² *Concrete Investigation of the Material of English Spelling*. By W. Franklin Jones. Published by the University of South Dakota. Pp. 27.

eight grades consists of 4,532 words. When it is remembered that these are words which the children actually use and not a full list of the words which they are able to understand, we realize that the task before the elementary school is a large one. The details of the distribution of these different words are of great interest to those who have to deal with children. Perhaps the list of the 100 words most commonly misspelled in these compositions is the most interesting part of the pamphlet. The first four words in this list of 100 are "which," "their," "there," and "separate."

Mr. Jones has prepared a speller on the basis of his investigation which is published by the Capital Supply Co., Pierre, South Dakota. This book has a somewhat ambitious title, *The Spelling Problem Solved*.

One recognizes the limitation in this kind of a list since it does not include words which the children ought to have but which are not now given in the ordinary course of school life. Business words and general words may enlarge the list beyond those which Mr. Jones now has at hand. Other investigations such as this and the earlier work of Mr. Ayres, as well as the later work of Cook and O'Shea, ought shortly to realize Mr. Jones's ambition of solving some of the school's spelling problems. Whatever the addition to the list from these other sources, it is evident that Mr. Jones has attacked in a definite, empirical way one of the problems of the school curriculum. There is no reason why a number of other subjects should not be attacked with the same spirit of definiteness and finality. The topics in geography can be enumerated even if they cannot be worked out with the same degree of exactness as that exhibited here in the spelling-book.

For some time past the movement in the direction of using the schoolhouse for the general purposes of community life has been under way. Meetings of all sorts are now very common in school buildings, and the grounds of schoolhouses are often utilized for general recreation purposes. The relation thus established between the school and the community has, however, operated in the reciprocal direction of bringing to the school co-operation of various types

which in the past were not common.¹ The physicians of the city, for example, have interested themselves in the sanitary conditions in and around the school, and in the personal health of the children; the playgrounds have been enlarged; pictures and other works of art have been brought into the school because the community has come to realize the barrenness of an undecorated building.

These various forms of co-operation with the school are enumerated and described by Mrs. Cabot in a way to make it clear that the school profits very greatly by cultivating relations with the community. She points out that every school officer is besieged by people who interfere with the school unless they are given something to do, and she suggests that such people be utilized to make contributions of all sorts. "Such people," she writes, "cling like a burr; we cannot do away with them. It is a temptation to pull them off one's sleeves once." Better, however, is the plan of appealing through reports and studies to such people and thus inducing them to contribute to playgrounds, social training of children, decoration of the buildings, and improvement of the physical conditions of schools.

The first excitement which followed the description of the Montessori system has somewhat subsided. Partisan feelings with regard to the merits and demerits of this system are somewhat less pronounced than they were a year ago, and the commercial interests which control the apparatus are more reasonable. Kindergartners are seeing the advantage of adopting any suggestions which the discussion brings, while the special schools that grew out of this movement are approaching more and more in character the well-organized American schools which deal with little children. It is very interesting at this stage of the movement to have a painstaking diagnosis of the movement such as Professor Kilpatrick has worked out in this monograph.²

Professor Kilpatrick went to Rome for the purpose of becoming personally acquainted with the Montessori schools. He speaks,

¹ *Volunteer Help to the Schools.* By Ella Lyman Cabot. (Riverside Educational Monographs.) Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. Pp. xi+136.

² *The Montessori System Examined.* By William Heard Kilpatrick. (Riverside Educational Monographs.) Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. Pp. viii+71.

therefore, with the insight of observation as well as on the basis of a careful reading of the Montessori books.

The monograph is divided into a number of chapters which deal with the general principles advocated in the Montessori system. Professor Kilpatrick finds as a result of his analysis that the interpretation given the general doctrine of development is inadequate. He regards the doctrine of liberty as a reiteration of the principle familiar to all students of the kindergarten. Self-expression and auto-education are recognized as valid principles but the means furnished by the Montessori system for working out these principles are regarded as too limited. The exercises of practical life which the system employs are regarded as altogether beneficial. In discussing sense-training as advocated by the Montessori system, Professor Kilpatrick enters into a labored discussion of formal discipline which seems hardly in place. One theoretical position can hardly be refuted by another theoretical position. The ordinary reader will not feel that Professor Kilpatrick has contributed very much to the exposition or criticism of sensory training. There is enough independent evidence in the hands of educators to make it possible to discuss this problem of sensory training without any reference to formal discipline. Finally, Professor Kilpatrick discusses the school arts of reading, writing, and arithmetic and regards it as one of the probable contributions of the method that these arts have been undertaken at so early an age. He finds, however, that the simplicity of the Italian language makes it somewhat easier to carry on this type of training in Italy than in America and he questions the wisdom of any attempt to imitate here this phase of the work.

It is difficult to understand why any author should attempt to deal with the problem of industrial education in the elementary school unless he has some very definite and clear-cut ideas on the matter. No one has any right to discuss this problem who is not able, first of all, to determine with a good deal of definiteness the point in the elementary school at which such training should be undertaken. At the present time the secondary school is the institution commonly held responsible for industrial education. In the second place, no one has any right to talk on this topic

unless he is prepared to say with a good deal of clearness what method shall be adopted in carrying on the work.

Mr. Cole¹ has written on the problem in what must be described as a vague, general way. In the latter part of the monograph he has given one example of what might be done in the way of studying industry in the elementary school. Briefly stated, this example includes some theoretical instruction about a local industry, some observation of the plant itself, and, finally, a little constructive work which consists in making models of the devices which have been observed in the factory. All of this is to be part of a course in industry. This course is to absorb the regular manual-training work of the elementary school and is also to have some of the time now devoted to geography, reading, and the other subjects. We are confidently informed that the introduction of such a course as this will be a renovating influence to modify the spirit and character of the whole elementary work.

There are throughout the book paragraphs which criticize the present school as a school bent upon culture and not practical in its character. The manual-training movement seems to this author to be very formal and unproductive. In short, there is a wholesale criticism in all directions of everything done at the present time by the elementary school, and the remedy offered is this course in industry. Whether this work should be done in the third grade or in the seventh grade is not stated by the author. In fact, one goes through the book with a good deal of doubt as to the author's acquaintance with the difference between the third grade and the seventh grade.

Page after page of general discussion seems to indicate that the author is extraordinarily foggy in his thinking about the different processes on which he delivers final opinions. For example, on p. 46 the author is dealing in a summary way with culture. Here are a few sentences which indicate the scope and depth of the discussion.

According to the traditional opinion, a study that is useful cannot also be cultural. Culture consists of philosophy, literature, and the fine arts.

¹ *Industrial Education in the Elementary School*. By Percival R. Cole. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. Pp. xviii+63.

. . . . We need a new theory of culture. The old definition may be retained—culture is the study of things worth while in themselves. It is the content, not the form, of the definition that must be changed. Things worth while in themselves include all great matters, whether useful for external ends or not. The industrial life is a great matter. It lies at the root of all civilization. It calls for the highest mental powers. It enriches the moral life with opportunities for the exercise of the economic virtues.

This eulogy of industry and its easy introduction into the group of cultural subjects is interesting; but one wonders whether executing a single process in a factory does involve the highest powers. One wonders whether the author would not have done well, before trying to persuade us in a wholesale way that industry is identical with culture, to have spent a little time in private thought distinguishing between various different kinds of industry. There are certain types of industry which are elevating; there are others which are not. If the educational world is to be persuaded to give adequate attention to industry, these distinctions must be recognized. It is not enough to dash into print with a wholesale eulogy of everything industrial. The book serves as a striking evidence of the complexity of this whole problem of dealing with industrial education. It certainly does not clear up the situation.